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# Extrinsic/Intrinsic Religious Orientation: A Moderator Between Religiosity and Prejudice in Christian and Muslim College Students

Brian O. Vazquez and Kelly McClure, Ph.D.

This cross-sectional correlational study examines the extrinsic/intrinsic features of religiosity and their relevance to prejudiced attitudes about homosexuality in Christian and Muslim college students. The main research question is whether extrinsic/intrinsic religious orientation in Christian and Muslim college students moderates the relationship between religiosity and prejudice against homosexual individuals. We hypothesized a correlation between centrality of religiosity and attitudes towards homosexuals, and extrinsic/intrinsic religious orientation as a moderator in the relationship. We have a sample of 84 participants who completed the self-report questionnaire through Qualtrics. Our findings indicate that, as a whole, our sample is religious, holding favorable attitudes toward homosexuals, and exhibiting an indiscriminately proreligious orientation. The results indicate that the variables are significantly positively correlated with a medium effect, which supports our first hypothesis. Our second hypothesis was not supported by the results in our sample as neither extrinsic nor intrinsic religious orientation moderate the relationship between centrality of religiosity and attitudes toward homosexuals.

## Introduction

Virtually every religion contains a command of tolerance and love for others, including value-violating outgroups.

### **Christianity:**

And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.

### **Islam:**

No one of you is a believer until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself.

### **Judaism:**

What you hate, do not do to anyone.

### **Buddhism:**

Hurt not others with that which pains thyself.

### **Confucius:**

What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others.

### **Hinduism:**

Do nothing to thy neighbor which thou wouldst not have him do to thee.

**Sikhism:**

Treat others as you would be treated yourself.

**Plato:**

May I do to others as I would that they should do unto me.

**Aristotle:**

We should behave to our friends as we wish our friends to behave to us.

Yet studies have consistently shown links between religion and different types of prejudices (e.g., Allport & Ross, 1967; Hunsberger & Jackson, 2005; Whitley & Kite, 2010).

In relevance to the question at hand, religion is defined as a set of beliefs and practices that explains and justifies societal norms and thereby encourages acceptance of the social order (Deborah L. Hall, David C. Matz, & Wendy Wood, 2010). Religiosity is a multidimensional construct that depends on the content of the religion, the literal/symbolic approach of the belief, the flexibility of the belief, the belief in either God or a higher power, how that entity is like, as well as how the person holds their belief, how the person practices the belief, the extrinsic/intrinsic religious orientation, and the person's cognitive rigidity. Because of the complex nature of religiosity, contemporary understandings have emerged from several lines of research.

For many people, religion functions as an important set of beliefs about the world through which they interpret their reality and make meaning of their lives (Joanna Goplen & Ashby E. Plant, 2015). In other words, religion contributes to a person's worldview. "A person's worldview directly affects his or her cognition, motivation, behaviors, and relationships with the world and other people," and worldviews serve important psychological functions by making meaning and order and creating feelings of predictability, certainty, and self-worth (Joanna Goplen & Ashby E. Plant, 2015). Threatening of a worldview creates uncertainty, an uncomfortable and aversive state that can constitute a threat (Małgorzata Kossowska & Maciej Sekerdej, 2015).

Due to the reliance a person has on worldviews, experiencing disconfirmation by encountering information that contradicts their core subjective beliefs about the way the world works can be catastrophic for the person, so people are motivated to maintain and protect their worldviews (Joanna Goplen & Ashby E. Plant, 2015). Individuals may use different strategies to protect their certainty of their worldviews, including avoiding others who do not share their worldview and responding with prejudice or discrimination to worldview violators (Joanna Goplen & Ashby E. Plant, 2015; Małgorzata Kossowska & Maciej Sekerdej, 2015).

One way to conceptualize and operationalize religiosity is through religious orientation. This idea of extrinsic/intrinsic religious orientation came from Gordon W. Allport and J. Michael Ross in the 1960s. They defined extrinsic orientation as a method of using religion for the person's own ends, e.g. to provide security and solace, sociability and distraction, status and self-justification. Persons with intrinsic orientation find their master motive in religion, having

embraced a creed that the individual internalizes and follows. In other words, extrinsically motivated persons use their religion, whereas intrinsically motivated persons live their religion. In addition, individuals may be indiscriminately proreligious (high on both) or indiscriminately antireligious or nonreligious (low on both), depending on how they scored on the Religious Orientation Scale (Allport & Ross, 1967).

Links have been made between prejudice and religious orientation but there has been no agreement on the relationship with intolerance because there are many targets of prejudice, including race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation. Therefore, looking at the target of prejudice is important when looking at the relationship between prejudice and religious orientation. In study Allport and Ross (1967) found that intrinsically motivated churchgoers were significantly less prejudiced than those who were extrinsically motivated, and churchgoers who were indiscriminately proreligious were more prejudiced than the consistently extrinsic and very much prejudiced than the consistently intrinsic types.

Hunsberger & Jackson conducted a meta-analysis and found that extrinsic orientation is positively related to racial/ethnic and gay/lesbian intolerance. This may be due to that fact that people with extrinsic religious orientation use religion for social status and they conform to popular trends, such as prejudice. Studies have found that people with intrinsic orientation show either no correlation or a negative correlation with racial prejudice. However, these same people often show a positive correlation for prejudice against gays (Whitley & Kite, 2010). This effect would be predicted, being that while most religions do not speak ill of other races (racism being due to upbringing rather than any religious foundation), they do tend to have little regard for homosexuals (Whitley & Kite, 2010). These findings support the idea that rather than religions extending universal acceptance of all people, general religiousness may instead cultivate conformity to the “right” tolerances and the “right” prejudices as defined by the formal and informal teachings of a person’s religious community (Malgorzata Kossowska & Maciej Sekerdej, 2015).

This present study focuses on how extrinsic/intrinsic religious orientation in Christian and Muslim college students moderates the relationship between centrality of religiosity and prejudiced attitudes towards value-violating outgroups, which we chose to be people who identify as homosexual. We chose homosexuals because homosexuality is considered one of the most stigmatized value-violating outgroups. We chose to study Muslims because there has been little research produced with the Muslim population, and we wanted to see if these past findings can generalize to another religion.

We proposed two hypotheses. Our first hypothesis proposed that there is a relationship between religiosity and prejudice against value-violating outgroups in Christian and Muslim college students. Our second hypothesis proposed that extrinsic/intrinsic religious orientation moderates the relationship between religiosity and prejudice against value-violating outgroups in Christian and Muslim college students.

## Method

### Participants

Eighty-five college students participated in this research study. Participants were mostly students at La Salle University (n = 70) and other universities in the United States (n = 5). 10 participants chose not to report their educational institution. We studied self-identifying males (n = 20) and females (n = 63). 89.4% ranged between the ages of 18 and 22, while the rest were older. Our sample consists of 68 self-identifying Christians and 12 self-identifying Muslims. The majority of the Christian participants self-identified as Catholic in addition to a range of other protestant denominations, and the majority of the Muslim participants self-identified as Sunni.

Our sample is very diverse in undergraduate college-year level, race, and ethnicity. Our sample is made up of 33.3% undergraduate first-year students, 22.6% undergraduate sophomore students, 20.2% undergraduate junior students, 20.2% undergraduate senior students, and 3.6% graduate students. Race categories resulted in the following: Asian 10.7%, Black or African American 22.6%, Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander 1.2%, White 58.3%, Missing 7.1%. Moreover, an open-ended question allowed participants to identify their ethnicity, which showed an even more diverse population than did the race question. Table 1 shows a categorization system of the participants' responses.

**Table 1**

<b>Asian: 1.2%</b>		
Asian	1	1.2%
<b>Black: 6%</b>		
African	2	2.4%
Black	3	3.6%
Haitian	1	1.2%
Jamaican	1	1.2%
Nigeria (IGBO)	1	1.2%
<b>Latino: 16.7%</b>		
Hispanic/Latino	11	13.1%

Dominican	1	1.2%
Mexican	1	1.2%
Puerto Rican	1	1.2%
<b>Middle Easterner: 4.8%</b>		
Arab	1	1.2%
Middle Eastern	3	3.6%
<b>Mixed: 2.4%</b>		
Biracial	1	1.2%
Hispanic & White	1	1.2%
<b>South Asian: 8.4%</b>		
Afghan	1	1.2%
Bangladeshi	1	1.2%
Pakistani	4	4.8%
South Asian	1	1.2%
<b>White: 21.6%</b>		
Albanian	1	1.2%
Caucasian	1	1.2%
English/Hungarian/ Polish	1	1.2%
Irish	2	2.4%
Irish-Lithuanian	1	1.2%
Irish-German	1	1.2%
Irish, Italian, Scottish,German	1	1.2%
Italian	3	3.6%

Italian-Polish	1	1.2%
German	1	1.2%
Ukranian	1	1.2%
White	4	4.8%
<b>Other: 10.8%</b>		
American	6	7.2%
Caribbean	1	1.2%
NonHispanic	1	1.2%
None	1	1.2%
<b>Missing: 22.6%</b>		

## Measures

We used one-item self-report measures to collect data about educational institution, college-year level, sex, age, race, ethnicity, and religion.

To measure our dependent variable, religiosity, we used The Centrality of Religiosity Scale (CRS) developed by Stefan Huber and Odilo W. Huber (2012). The CRS is a 15-item measure of the centrality, importance, or salience of religious meanings in personality. It measures the general intensities of five theoretically-defined core dimensions of religiosity: public practice, private practice, religious experience, ideology, and intellectual dimension. The measurement is in different versions with specific modifications developed for studies with Buddhists, Hindus, and Muslims. The items are general and relevant in light of the context of different religious traditions. Therefore, the measurement is suitable for interreligious studies.

Participants self-reported on their subjective importance of religion or the salience of religious identity. For example, for the dimension of public practice, participants were asked: “How often do you take part in religious services?” For the dimension of intellect, a question asked: “How often do you keep yourself informed about religious questions through radio, television, internet, newspapers, or books?” Items are in a likert-type scale format and are scored 1 to 5, where 1 indicates “never” or “not at all” and 5 indicates “very often” or “very much so.” To calculate the CRS score, the item sum score is divided by the number of scored scale items. This produces a range of scores between 1.0 and 5.0. Scores are categorized as 1.0-2.0 (non-religious), 2.1-3.9 (religious), and 4.0-5.0 (highly-religious).

To measure the dependent variable, prejudiced attitudes, we used the Homosexual Attitude Scale (HAS) developed by Mary E. Kite and Kay Deaux (1986). The HAS is a 21-item likert-scale measurement that assesses people's stereotypes, misconceptions, and anxieties about homosexuals. It contains a unidimensional factor representing a favorable or unfavorable evaluation of homosexuals. The scale has excellent internal consistency (alphas  $> .92$ ) and good test-retest reliability ( $r = .71$ ). It is equally reliable for gay male and lesbian targets.

Participants self-report on their attitudes towards homosexuals, indicating their agreeableness with the 21 items, 11 of which are reverse scored. Examples of the questions include "I would not mind having a homosexual friend" and "Homosexuals should be kept separate from the rest of society (i.e., separate housing, restricted employment)." In scoring the normally-scored items, the higher the score the more favorable the attitude towards homosexuals, and for the reverse-scored items, the lower the score the more favorable attitude towards homosexuals.

To measure our moderators, extrinsic and intrinsic religious orientation, we used the Allport-Ross Religious Orientation Scale (ROS) developed by Gordon Allport and Michael Ross (1967). As described earlier, extrinsic orientation refers to a utilitarian motivation underlying religious motivation, while intrinsic motivation refers to motivation arising from goals set forth by the religious tradition itself, regarding religion as the "master motive." The 20-item self-report questionnaire asks participants how they agree with extrinsically- and intrinsically-worded statements such as: "The primary purpose of prayer is to gain relief and protection" and "The prayers I say when I am alone carry as much meaning and personal emotions as those said by me during services."

The scale gives scorers two options: treat the scale as a continuous scale or as two separate subscales. The problem with a continuous scale is that those individuals who endorse extrinsically worded items do not necessarily reject those worded intrinsically and vice versa. Therefore, we chose to treat extrinsic and intrinsic orientation as two separate constructs and as two separate subscales, where the higher the scores for each of the subscales, the more intrinsic or extrinsic the religious orientation of the individual is, respectively.

## **Procedure**

Participants were recruited through on-site classroom recruiting, announcements, and emails that provided them with a description of the study and the informed consent. Participants were provided with a link that brought them to an anonymous and confidential online survey powered by Qualtrics. They could access the link using their computer or a computer at their university at a time that was convenient for them before the study deadline. The study required participants to be over the age of 18, read and speak in English, be enrolled in a college or university, and self-identify as Muslim or Christian.

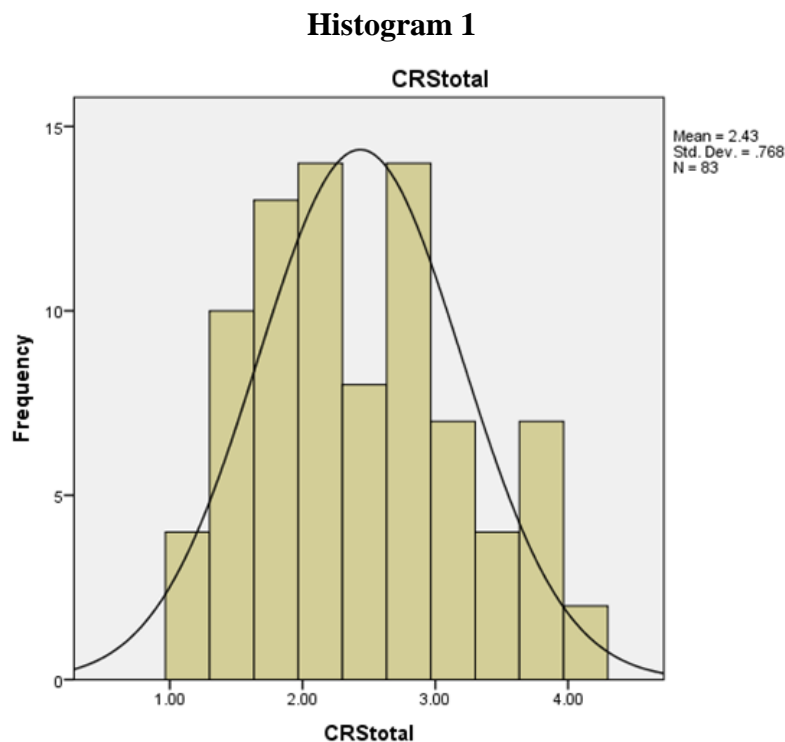
On the first page of the survey, they were given details about the study and asked to indicate their choice to volunteer. They were then directed to a separate questionnaire to



individually complete the survey. The survey involved answering basic questions about their demographics as well as their attitudes and behaviors. The survey took between 15 to 25 minutes to complete and participants were ensured that they could discontinue the survey at any time by simply closing their browser. La Salle University students were offered extra credit for participation in the study according to their instructors' guidelines. All students who completed the study were given the option to be entered in a raffle for a chance to win a \$25 gift card.

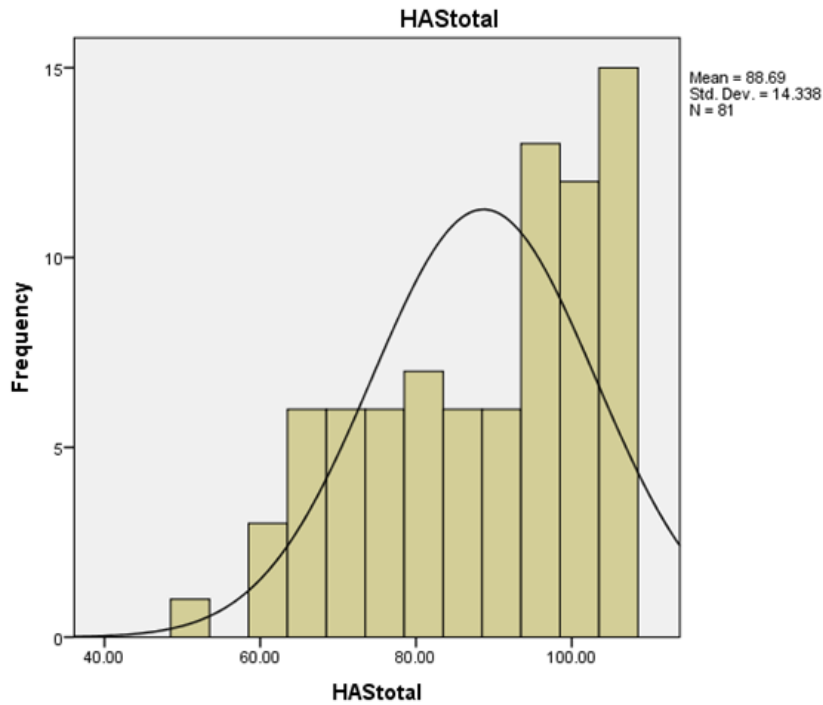
## Results

Scores from the Centrality of Religiosity scale can range from 1 to 5. Scores can be categorized as 1.0-2.0 (non-religious), 2.1-3.9 (religious), and 4.0-5.0 (highly-religious). Our overall Christian and Muslim sample scored a mean of 2.43 with a standard deviation of .77, indicating a somewhat religious sample. Histogram 1 indicates a normal distribution curve.



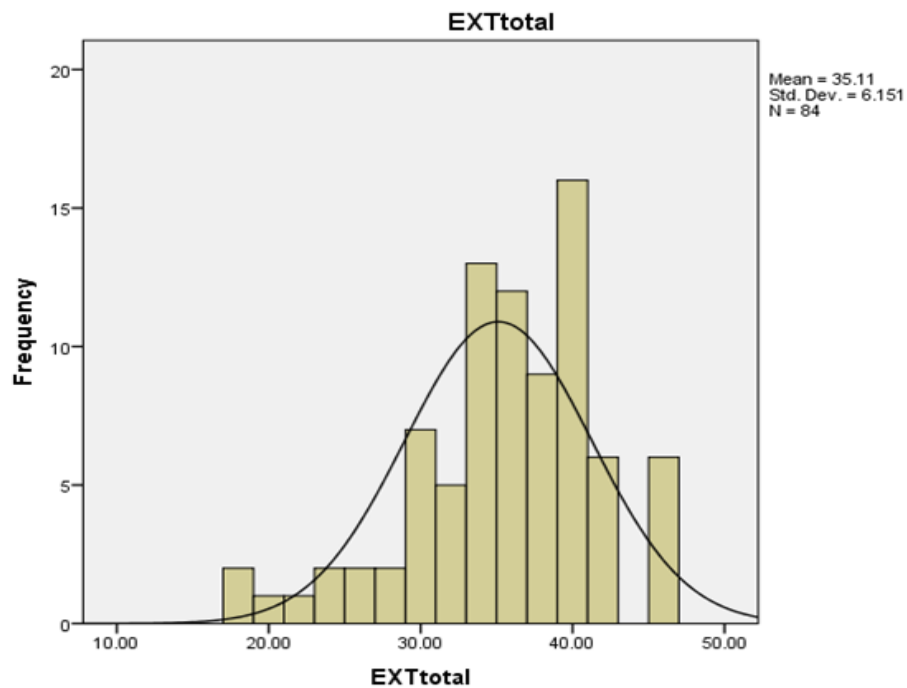
Scores from the Homosexual Attitude Scale can range from 21 to 105, where higher scores indicate more favorable attitudes towards homosexuals. Our overall Christian and Muslim sample scored a mean of 88.69 with a standard deviation of 14.34, indicating overall positive attitudes toward homosexuals. Histogram 2 shows a left skew, indicating some participants having more positive attitudes than others.

**Histogram 2**

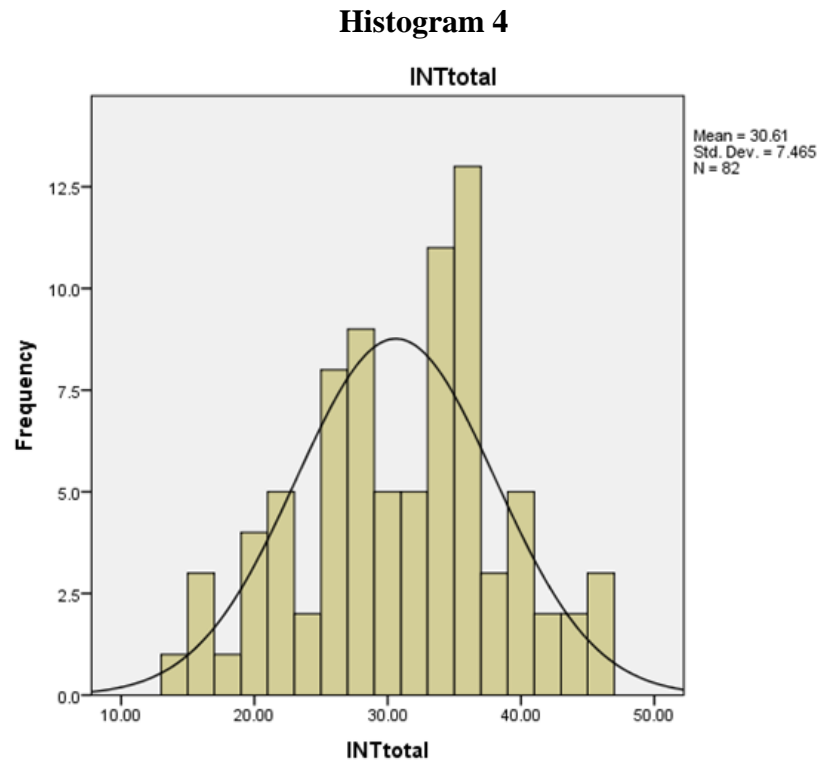


Scores on the extrinsic religiosity subscale can range from 11 and 55, where higher scores indicate a more extrinsic orientation. Our overall Christian and Muslim sample scored a mean of 35.11 with a standard deviation of 6.15, indicating a not so extrinsic group. Histogram 3 shows a normal distribution curve.

**Histogram 3**



Scores on the intrinsic religiosity subscale scores can range from 9 and 45, where higher scores indicate higher intrinsic religious orientation. Our overall Christian and Muslim sample scored a mean of 30.61 with a standard deviation of 7.47, indicating a not so intrinsic group. Histogram 4 shows a normal distribution curve.



According to EXT and INT scores, our sample can be categorized as indiscriminately proreligious (high on both extrinsic and intrinsic religious orientation).

## Correlations

Table 2 shows the overall results in our Christian and Muslim sample. As a whole, the scores indicate a statistically significant positive correlation with a medium effect size between the variables of centrality of religiosity and attitudes towards homosexuals ( $r = .35, p < .001$ ). This means that the more religious our sample scored, the higher they scored on attitudes towards homosexuals. As predicted, our study indicates that there is indeed a relationship between religiosity and prejudice, supporting our first hypothesis. What is unique in our findings is that the relationship is in the opposite direction of what past research has found.

More specifically for each of our religious groups, our Christian sample scored an overall statistically significant positive correlation with a medium effect size between centrality of religiosity and attitudes towards homosexuals ( $r = .35, p < .001$ ), and our Muslim sample scored an overall non-statistically significant positive correlation with a slightly higher effect size ( $r =$

.47 and  $p < .09$ ), indicating that the Muslim participants had a slightly stronger relationship than did the Christian participants, although not significant partly due to our low sample ( $n = 14$ ).

**Table 2**

<b>Correlations</b>					
		<b>HAStotal</b>	<b>CRStotal</b>	<b>EXTtotal</b>	<b>INTtotal</b>
<b>HAStotal</b>	<b>Pearson Correlation</b>	1	.353**	-.222 <sup>+</sup>	-.308**
	<b>Sig. (2-tailed)</b>		.001	.043	.004
	<b>N</b>	84	84	84	84
<b>CRStotal</b>	<b>Pearson Correlation</b>	.353**	1	-.157	-.768**
	<b>Sig. (2-tailed)</b>	.001		.154	.000
	<b>N</b>	84	84	84	84
<b>EXTtotal</b>	<b>Pearson Correlation</b>	-.222 <sup>+</sup>	-.157	1	.292**
	<b>Sig. (2-tailed)</b>	.043	.154		.007
	<b>N</b>	84	84	84	84
<b>INTtotal</b>	<b>Pearson Correlation</b>	-.308**	-.768**	.292**	1
	<b>Sig. (2-tailed)</b>	.004	.000	.007	
	<b>N</b>	84	84	84	84
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).					

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

## Regression

We conducted a multiple regression analysis to calculate our moderators: extrinsic orientation and intrinsic orientation. Table 3 shows that 10% of the variance in HAS is accounted for by the extrinsic model ( $r^2 = .96$ ). This interaction has low significance ( $p = .81$ ), indicating that extrinsic religious orientation is not a moderator of the relationship between religiosity and prejudiced attitudes towards homosexuals.

### Table 3

Model Summary									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.353 <sup>a</sup>	.125	.114	14.02392	.125	11.674	1	82	.001
2	.391 <sup>b</sup>	.153	.132	13.87988	.028	2.711	1	81	.104
3	.391 <sup>c</sup>	.153	.121	13.96634	.000	.000	1	80	.987
a. Predictors: (Constant), CRStotal									
b. Predictors: (Constant), CRStotal, EXTtotal									
c. Predictors: (Constant), CRStotal, EXTtotal, CRSEXTmoderator									

Table 4 shows that 12% of the variance in HAS is accounted for by the intrinsic model ( $r^2 = .99$ ). This interaction has low significance ( $p = .99$ ), indicating that intrinsic religious orientation is not a moderator of the relationship between religiosity and prejudiced attitudes towards homosexuals.

**Table 4**

<b>Model Summary</b>									
<b>Model</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>R Square</b>	<b>Adjusted R Square</b>	<b>Std. Error of the Estimate</b>	<b>Change Statistics</b>				
					<b>R Square Change</b>	<b>F Change</b>	<b>df1</b>	<b>df2</b>	<b>Sig. F Change</b>
<b>1</b>	.353 <sup>a</sup>	.125	.114	14.02392	.125	11.674	1	82	.001
<b>2</b>	.358 <sup>b</sup>	.128	.106	14.08294	.003	.314	1	81	.577
<b>3</b>	.359 <sup>c</sup>	.129	.096	14.16534	.001	.060	1	80	.806
<b>a. Predictors: (Constant), CRStotal</b>									
<b>b. Predictors: (Constant), CRStotal, INTtotal</b>									
<b>c. Predictors: (Constant), CRStotal, INTtotal, CRSINmoderator</b>									

## Conclusion

Our results support our first hypothesis that there is indeed a correlation between religiosity and prejudice against homosexuals in Christian and Muslim college students but in the opposite direction that research shows. Our second hypothesis is not supported as our results indicate that religious orientation does not moderate the relationship in our sample. Our sample of 84 Christian and Muslim college students resulted as moderately religious, holding favorable attitudes toward homosexuals, and exhibiting an indiscriminately proreligious orientation. As a whole, the results of the sample indicate a statistically significant positive correlation with a

medium effect size between the variables of centrality of religiosity and attitudes towards homosexuals. The Muslim group had a relatively stronger effect size than did the Christian group, although not statistically significant because of the small sample size. Our regression analysis indicates that neither extrinsic nor intrinsic orientation moderates the relationship of these variables.

## **Discussion & Limitations**

Our research study produced unique results. Past research says that the more religious people are the more prejudice they will be against value-violating outgroups, particularly homosexuals. However, our study found the opposite – the more religious our sample was as a whole the more positive attitudes they had towards homosexuals. There are a few theories that explain this relationship.

Gregory Herek (2015) states public opinion polls show increasing support for marriage equality, opposing employment discrimination based on sexual orientation, and nonheterosexuals being able to be good parents. This opinion shift is seen in nearly every demographic grouping. He states that this might be due, in part, to the process called generational replacement, where older adults, who tend to be less accepting of sexual minorities, are (literally) dying out and replaced by younger generations in which positive attitudes toward sexual minorities are much more widespread. 89.4% of our sample ranged between the ages of 18 and 22, so this younger generation may harbor more positive attitudes towards value-violating outgroups than did the generation that Allport and Ross studied in 1967.

This cannot account for all of the difference in attitudes, however, because attitudes are changing too quickly, so attitudes must also be changing at the individual level. Herek cites a poll conducted on marriage equality attitudes, which reveals a 16% point increase in positive attitudes, 25% attributed to generational replacement and 75% to individuals changing their mind. There are countless of reasons why this might be so such as attempts to embrace diversity, the development of a more pluralistic and considerate attitudes in our society, dialogue between groups, and even a change of rhetoric or emphasis in religious services.

Despite the major shifts in public opinion, discriminatory treatment of value-violating outgroups remains widespread, particularly with homophobia. Empirical research says that people who discriminate use prejudice to express deeply felt values, such as religious or political beliefs, thereby affirming their sense of personal identity and feelings of self-worth (Herek, 2015). A believer may think negative attitudes are integral to religious identity, so that person will not change them as long as the prejudice serves this value-expressive function. However, the believer may no longer need this attitude if there are inconsistencies between her negative attitudes and her core values. Perhaps this younger generation is discovering these age-long inconsistencies between their beliefs and behaviors.

Our study indicated that religious orientation does not moderate the relationship between religiosity and prejudice. This means that, in our sample, the direction or strength of the relation between religiosity and prejudice is not affected by whether believers internalize their beliefs or use their beliefs as a means to an end.

This study has many limitations. First, our sample was quite small, particularly with the Muslim group. This may be why the Muslim group's correlation effect size was not statistically significant. We also could not run a regression analysis to see if extrinsic/intrinsic orientation was a moderator just for the Muslim group. A second limitation is in the external validity of the study. 89.4% of the students ranged between the ages of 18 and 22. All participants lived in the United States and were college students. 75% of the participants were female – perhaps male harbor different attitudes and present different results. In order to have good validity in our findings and to test theories such as generational replacement, we must have a larger sample with greater demographic variance.

For future direction, studies may include participants of a greater demographic variance, including equal representation of non-college students, non-female gender, and non-adolescents. Second, studies may include other value-violating outgroups to investigate any differences in relationship between prejudice and the targeted outgroup. Third, other measurements can be used to operationalize religiosity, prejudice, and extrinsic/intrinsic religious moderation. Fourth, studies may consider investigating other constructs that might act as moderators, mediators, or third variables that may influence the relationship. Finally, studies may consider using an interview-style or open-ended question operationalization allow participants to self-report explanations of the relationship between their religiosity and prejudiced attitudes.



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